

IMPERIAL RUSSIAN TRAGEDY STILL SHROUDED IN MYSTERY

Death of the Czarina Again Reported but Lack of Details Casts Doubt on Greatest Royal Downfall

THERE seems no longer to be serious question but that the unhappy last Empress of All the Russias and every one of her children have followed the last of the Czar into eternal night, dying as he died, secretly for the moment, perhaps forever obscurely; executed, which is to say murdered, by their jailers, the Bolsheviks. So far as has been learned, the thing was done within the summer at Ekaterinburg in the Urala.

All competent witnesses of the empress's fall have agreed in testifying that the Czarina was at least the instrument by which the dynasty was undermined and her husband overthrown. There is now a sensational report, which certainly should be left for the most careful investigation, of evidence that she was traitress as well as duped, and that the death of Kitchener, who was lost off the Orkney Islands with the British cruiser which was taking him to Russia on a special mission, was accompanied by the German on the Czarina's own tip over a private telephone wire.

Champions of her memory will not need to question that such a wire existed, or even that the message fatal to Lord Kitchener went over it. Both seem eminently possible. What will be questioned is that Alexandra Feodorovna herself did or knew of or counteracted the telephoning and any other betrayals of the kind.

Characters in Romantic Literature

The question of her integrity has no serious importance now, but it has interest, and in future will have more; the last Romanoffs will probably be the characters of a whole romantic literature of epics, plays and stories. And as somebody remarked when it was rumored that she was dead, the last Czarovitch is likely to be as ubiquitous for the next fifty years as was the last Dauphin.

The Czarina was a strong figure, in the sense of being imperious, inflexible or obstinate. But she was not a strong nature. Her force of personality was the symptom of a disease. Exactly what this disease was, the alienists and neurologists must say. They are certain to pronounce it either a form of insanity or else one of those border-line troubles, like obsession or hysteria, which they term the psychoneuroses.

Whatever it was, its best known effects in her conduct were a mysticism which was organized, overwhelming superstition, and a chronic anxiety of a morbid kind. Ever after the first few years of her marriage she had plenty of grounds for fear, but a person of sound constitution would have been able to deal with it; in the Czarina's case it dealt with her.

Disposition as a Child Sunny.

She was born in 1872 and lost her mother and one of her sisters by diphtheria, with which she herself was seriously ill when she was six years old. Accounts of her childhood represent her as sunny, sympathetic and rather precociously intellectual, with a special gift at languages. In her teens she was credited with a passion for sociology, and after she went to Russia for a scientific interest in organized social welfare work.

This may or may not have been the usual flattering portrait of a royalty. At all events she was a great thinker, living much within herself, and of exceedingly delicate constitution. She was passionately devoted to her father and his inseparable companion. In 1888 she visited St. Petersburg in his company, and during that visit the then Czarovitch fell in love with her. There is unusually little question, as royal romances go, that this one was genuine, however much state matchmaking may have fostered it. Two sensible people in authority

disapproved of it, on what we should now call eugenic grounds—the Russian Emperor and the British Queen. Both the young people were delicate and the Emperor had the further objection that the Princess was a Lutheran, and Queen Victoria, perhaps, she was fond of the girl—that the Russian throne was the shining mark of all thrones for violent death. It was years before the betrothal was officially announced, and meanwhile Nicholas was packed off on his famous Asiatic tour, either to recruit his health or get over his infatuation.

Returning, he came to England, and the courtship was a bucolic idyll, the young man refusing to be royalty lionized in any fashion that would take him from his sweetheart's side. There is a story that Wilhelm II. interceded for his friend the Czarovitch, and there is a more substantiated story that this illustrious precipitator finally butted in, to be coarse about it, and precipitated the announcement of the betrothal.

He got Czar Alexander's permission, invited himself to dinner with the Princess's father at Darmstadt, saying nothing about the Czar's permission, and during the meal stood up and called for a toast to "the illustrious betrothed, Nicholas Alexandrovitch and Alexandra Feodorovna," who were astonished and thrown into blushing confusion. Then the future illustrious candidate for hereditary presidency of the Germany over which he had reigned exhibited the Czar on his death bed hastened the marriage, which took place in November, 1894. The first

years of Alexandra's life as Empress were happy ones. She was the mistress of twelve huge palaces in St. Petersburg alone, their appointments the most magnificent in Europe. The Czar's private revenue was \$7,000,000 a year. But the domestic tastes of the couple inclined away from pomp and toward simple outdoor sports and quiet country villas.

Picture Changes in 1898.

Russia, for Russia, enjoyed about four years of internal tranquility. But in 1898 the picture changes sharply. The change begins with the first of that series of famines which, directly causing strikes and agrarian trouble, prepared the revolution. This begins in 1905, midway of a national night-mare—pogroms, local uprisings and the carnival of assassinations of reactionary nobles and officials; the Japanese war, which showed the world the shell giant Russia was.

All these events wrought terribly upon the constitution of the Czarina, in whom, moreover, it such it was had already broken out. The general strain was more than she could bear, but the particular trouble that is supposed to have unbalanced her was the national anxiety for an heir to the throne, which anxiety she humanly shared, and the four disappointments of high hopes in the births of daughters.

The Russian populace was never sympathetic with the alien Empress, who, on her side, however social service may have interested her, was entirely unlighted for winning popular affection. By the time of the birth of the fourth Grand Duchess, Anastasia, there was a rather formidable sentiment among both the loyal people and the court politicians in favor of Nicholas putting her away as Napoleon put away Josephine to take an older wife who might bear him a son. To the credit of the Emperor it is acknowledged that he was stanch in his conjugal loyalty.

Tried to Browbeat Science.

Every one remembers how desperately the imperial couple tried to browbeat science into making to order a discovery that would control the sex of an unborn child. The Czarina's childhood faith had been Lutheran, but her religion was decidedly of the ritualistic bent, and once taken into the Russian Church she became a first devotee as to mystical ceremonies. Nervous temperaments with this tendency in worship are also ultrasuperstitious and as much the natural prey of witch doctors, fortune

tellers and that ilk as the hypochondriacal are of medical quacks.

It is now known, though at the time it was not, that while the Czar and Czarina were beseeching aid of science the Czarina was also searching out every charlatan in Russia. To get her ear it was only necessary to proclaim yourself as having supernatural powers which might be of service in the matter of the heir. With this fact before us there is no longer a mystery in the ascendency of Rasputin. A year before the fact he predicted the birth of a son, and after it occurred he was a made man at court and the Romanoff an unmade dynasty.

Rasputin knew enough to maintain his hold in the capacity of the Czar's chief confidant, and he was a steady, unflinching, and according to the latest reliable information, receiving an insufficient dose of food every other day. Their keepers were men with whom the average American would not lower himself to associate. The prisoners had no privacy of any hour, whatever else they had and suffered heaven knows. The story is that the former Czarina bore herself well to the end.

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Then for weeks the mother and her five children and two of her waiting women were kept locked in one small room and slowly starved, according to the latest reliable information, receiving an insufficient dose of food every other day. Their keepers were men with whom the average American would not lower himself to associate. The prisoners had no privacy of any hour, whatever else they had and suffered heaven knows. The story is that the former Czarina bore herself well to the end.

Because of symbolism Russia had suffered through her and it is a symbol that she suffered. There is probably no central figure in all the spectacular tragedies of history who was more completely, from cradle to grave, the constant and helpless victim of circumstance over which she had not the least control. She did what she should not have done, she left undone what she should have done, but in it and there was no health in her.

Washington was, as usual on election night, a combination of keen interest in the seats of the mighty and stolid apathy on the part of the man on the street. The newspaper bulletins were watched by small and rather listless crowds.

At the White House they say the President received the returns all alone, except for Mrs. Wilson, though Mr. Tumulty had a group of interested politicians in the White House offices. It's the first time since he has been in the White House that the President and his secretary have failed to go home to vote. Even at the prime time they have turned up with commendable regularity.

There was rejecting that Washington was to have the Truman Newberry back from Detroit. They were part of the Cabinet circle—Mr. Newberry was Assistant Secretary, and then Secretary of the Navy during the entire four years of Roosevelt's second term—and are regarded as eminently desirable both politically and socially.

And of course there were cases—like that of McCormick vs. Lewis—where factions, regardless of politics, were divided. People really like the "Ham" Lewis—even though they say Senator Lewis's pink whiskers and his perfectly lovely clothes, "which are only exceeded by his extreme personal appearance." And they really like the Medill McCormicks. Mrs. McCormick

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